NATIONAL SYMBOLS

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सत्यमेव जयते

VIDYAPURI

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INTRODUCTION

The Indian civilization is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. The history of India and its culture goes back to 5000 years. It is a land of snow-capped mountains, great rivers, vast and fertile plains, deserts and a rich variety of flora and fauna.

The greatest strength of India is its unity in diversity. It is a land of varied cultures and rich traditions. India has been enriched by its moments of turbulence and triumphs.

We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures that we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open.

Jawaharlal Nehru

THE NATIONAL FLAG

The Constituent Assembly of India adopted the National Flag on 22 July, 1947. The shape of the National flag is horizontal. It has three colours (tricolour) and has a chakra (wheel) at the centre.

The colours of the Flag are deep saffron (kesari) at the top, white in the middle and dark green at the bottom in equal proportions.

The diameter of the chakra is approximately the width of the white band. The colour of the chakra is navy blue and it has twenty four spokes. The design of the chakra is taken from the wheel, which appears on the abacus of the Lion Capital of Emperor Ashoka at Sarnath. The ratio of width of the Flag to its length is two to three.

The colours symbolize diversity and strength. The saffron stands for courage, sacrifice and the spirit of renunciation; the white stands for purity and truth, and the green for faith and fertility.

The chakra represents the "wheel of law" in the third century B.C. adopted by Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. It adds historical depth to the National Flag.

सत्यमेव जयते

THE NATIONAL EMBLEM

The Government of India adopted the Lion Capital as the National Emblem on 26th January 1950. The National Emblem is a symbol of contemporary India's reaffirmation of its commitment to world peace and goodwill.

The National Emblem depicts four lions, standing back to back. It has been adopted from the Lion Capital of Emperor Ashoka at Sarnath.

Carved out of a single block of polished sandstone, the Lion Capital is crowned with the Wheel of the Law (Dharma Chakra). This same chakra can be found on the Indian National Flag. Only three lions are visible, the fourth lion is hidden from view. The lions symbolize - power, courage and confidence. The four lions rest on a circular abacus. The abacus is surrounded by four smaller animals - guardians of the four directions: the lion of the North, the elephant of the East, the horse of the South and the bull of the West. The abacus rests on a lotus in full bloom, exemplifying the fountainhead of life and creative inspiration.

The words *Satyameva Jayate* from Mundaka Upanishad, meaning 'Truth Alone Triumphs', are inscribed below the abacus in devanagari script.

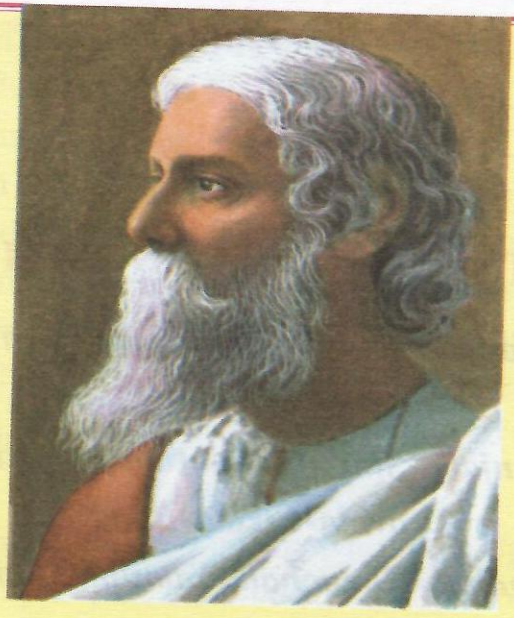
The Lion Capital was erected in the third century B.C. by Emperor Ashoka to mark the spot where Buddha had first proclaimed his gospel of peace.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

Jana-gana-mana-adhinayaka, jaya he
Bharatha-bhagya-vidhata.
Punjaba-Sindhu-Gujarata-Maratha
Dravida-Utkala-Banga
Vindhya-Himachala-Yamuna-Ganga
Uchchala-Jaladhi-taranga.
Tava shubha name jage,
Tava shubha asisa mage,
Gahe tava jaya gatha,
Jana-gana-mangala-dayaka jaya he
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.
Jaya he, jaya he, jaya he,
Jaya jaya jaya, jaya he !

The National Anthem of India is the song *Jana-gana-mana*. The Constituent Assembly of India adopted the National Anthem on 24th January 1950. It had been sung on 27th December 1911 at the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress.

Rabindranath Tagore, the celebrature Bengali poet, composed the song *Jana-gana-mana*. Playing time of the full version of the National Anthem is approximately fifty two seconds.



The following is the English version of the National Anthem.

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,
dispenser of India's destiny.
Thy name rouses the hearts of Punjab, Sindhes,
Gujarat and Maratha,
Of the Dravida, Utkal and Banga;
it echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and Himachal,
mingles in the music of Yamuna and Ganga
It is chanted by the waves of the Indian Ocean.
They pray for thy blessings and sing thy praise.
The protection of all people is in thy hand,
thou dispenser of Bharat's destiny.
Victory, victory, victory to thee.

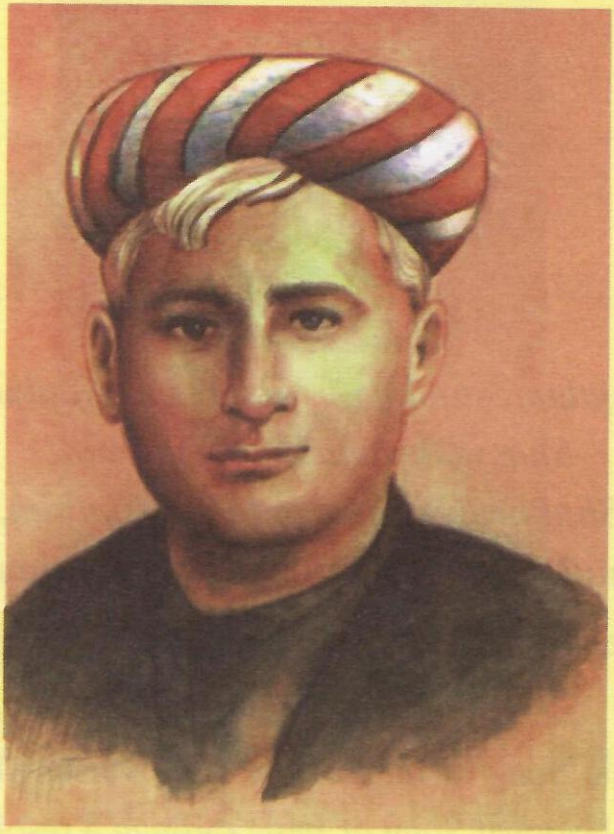
THE NATIONAL SONG

Vande Mataram!
Sujalam, suphalam, malayaja shitalam,
Shasyashyamalam, Mataram!
Shubhrajyotshna pulakitayaminim,
Phullakusumita drumadala shobhinim,
Suhasinim sumadhura bhashinim,
Sukhadam varadam, Mataram !

The National Song of India is the song Vande Mataram. It was adopted as the National Song of India through a resolution in 1937.

The song Vande Mataram was composed in Sanskrit by the Bengali writer Bankimchandra Chatterji. It was incorporated in his famous novel *Ananda Math* (1882). The song symbolizes the richness of Mother India. The song was a great source of inspiration to the people of India during the freedom struggle.

The song has an equal status with the National Anthem. Poet Rabindranath Tagore set the tune for the song. It was sung for the first time in the twelfth Annual Session of the Indian National Congress in 1896.



Sri Aurobindo's translation of *Vande Mataram* (first stanza) :

I bow to thee, Mother,
richly-watered, richly-fruited,
cool with the winds of the south,
dark with the crops of the harvests,
The Mother !
Her nights rejoicing in the glory of the moonlight,
her lands clothed beautifully with her trees in flowering bloom,
sweet of laughter, sweet of speech,
The Mother, giver of boons, giver of bliss.

THE NATIONAL CALENDAR

The Government of India adopted the National Calendar from 22nd March 1957. The National Calendar is based on the Saka Era with *Chaitra* being its first month. It consists of 365 days in a normal year.

The Government of India also adopted the Gregorian calendar for the following official purposes: (i) Gazette of India, (ii) news broadcast by All India Radio, (iii) calendars issued by the Government of India and (iv) Government communications addressed to the members of the public.

Dates of the National Calendar correspond to those of the Gregorian Calendar. The first day of *Chaitra* always corresponds to 22nd March in a normal year and on 21st March in a leap year.

THE NATIONAL ANIMAL

The National Animal of India is the magnificent Tiger. Its scientific name is Panthera tigris (linnaeus). It has a thick yellow coat of fur with dark stripes. The Tiger symbolizes grace, strength, and enormous power.

There are eight different races of Tigers in the world. The Indian race is the Royal Bengal Tiger. Royal Bengal Tigers are found all over India and in some neighbouring countries such as Nepal and

Bhutan. Tigers are fast runners and excellent swimmers. Tigers are carnivorous.

Indian Tigers are the crowning glory and the light of the Indian wild life. They are tough, muscular and majestic creatures that roam the forests of India. In some places such as the Sunderbans in West Bengal, the Tiger is worshipped as a deity.

To check the dwindling population of Tigers in India, 'Project Tiger' was launched in 1973. There are 23 Tiger reserves in India covering an area over 33,126 sq. kms. There are approximately 3000 Tigers roaming free in these reserves.

THE NATIONAL BIRD

The National Bird of India is the majestic Peacock. Its scientific name is Pavo cristatus. It is the one of the showiest of all birds because of its colourfully great swan-size and beautiful feathers. It has a long slender metallic greenish-blue coloured neck and breast. Its tail has over 200 elongated gorgeous bronze-green colour feathers brilliantly marked with bold spots that look like eyes.

Technically, the male species are called Peacocks and the female species are called Peahens. The males are more attractive than the females. The female is a little brownish in colour and slightly smaller than the male. Their elaborate courtship is a breath-taking sight. The male fans out its spectacular tail. These birds do not sound as sweet as they look - they have a harsh call.

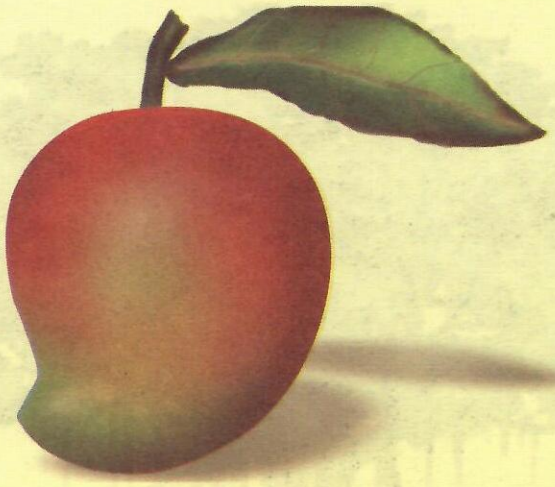
The Peacock is native to India and found all over the country. They were once hunted for food but now their hunting is banned in India. They are now fully protected under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972.

THE NATIONAL FLOWER

The National Flower of India is the Lotus. Its scientific name is Nymphaea. The flower is known for its delicate beauty and it symbolizes creative inspiration.

It is an aquatic plant with broad floating leaves and bright fragrant flowers. It grows only in shallow waters. The exquisite Lotus flower rises above the water and is usually white or pink with 15 or more oval, spreading petals, and a peculiar, flat seedcase in its centre. This plant has cup-shaped flowers that are up to 25 cm (10 inches) across.

For thousands of years, the Lotus flower has symbolized spiritual enlightenment. In India the sacred Lotus is legendary and part of folklore and mythology. Lakshmi, spouse of Lord Vishnu, and the Goddess Prosperity, is usually portrayed as sitting on a Lotus. The cup-shaped Lotus flowers are often represented in Indian art and architecture.



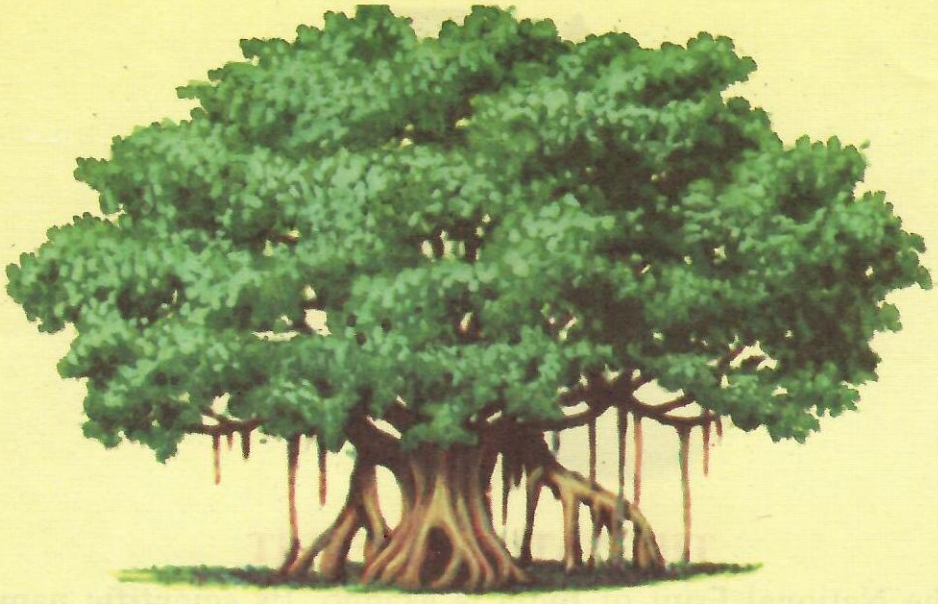
THE NATIONAL FRUIT

The National Fruit of India is Mango. Its scientific name is Mangifera Indica. It is a juicy fruit and is known for its sweet taste.

Mango is regarded as the king of fruits in tropical areas of the world. It is one of the most popular fruits in India. It is colourful and delicious. It has different shapes and sizes. The evergreen mango trees are also attractive in the landscape.

In India there are over 100 varieties of mangoes. The fruits are 2 to 9 inches long and may be kidney shaped. The leathery skin is waxy and smooth, and when ripe, it turns from entirely pale green to yellow marked with red. Mangoes are eaten ripe, used for chutnies, used for pickles, etc. This juicy fruit is a rich source of vitamins A, C and D.

Mangoes have been cultivated in India from time immemorial. The legendary poet Kalidasa sang its praises. The great conqueror Alexander and the Chinese pilgrim, Hieun Tsang, loved its taste. The Mughal Emperor Akbar loved mangoes so much that he planted 100,000 Mango trees in Darbhanga, known as Lakhi Bagh.



THE NATIONAL TREE

The National Tree of India is the Banyan Tree. Its scientific name is *Ficus Bengalensis*. It is also called as Barh. The Banyan tree symbolizes longevity, strength and generosity.

The Banyan is a remarkable tree that often grows to over 21 metres in height. The term "Banyan" means a tree with aerial roots. The Banyan tree sends down from its branches great numbers of shoots, which take root and become new trunks. A single tree thus may spread over a large area and look like a small forest. It has tiny flowers. The fruits are round and red with innumerable tiny seeds.

Because of its massiveness and its longevity, this tree is considered immortal. It is an integral part of the myths and legends of India and is considered sacred. Even today, the Banyan tree is the focal point of village life and the village council meets under the shade of this tree.

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